

AUBURN, N.Y. - Today, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) brought together farmers and concerned community members to discuss specific needs of the local agricultural community as Congress prepares to reauthorize funding for the federal Farm Bill.

“Agriculture remains the number one industry in New York State – employing twelve percent of the workforce and generating over \$3.6 billion in economic activity each year,” Arcuri said. “I want farmers across this district to know that I will fight tooth and nail to protect that the interests of New York’s over 37,000 farmers in this year’s Farm Bill reauthorization process.”

Since taking the oath of office in January, Arcuri and his staff have had over 50 meetings with representatives of the agricultural community. “As the saying goes, knowledge is power,” Arcuri said. “The only way I can effectively fight for New York farmers is if I hear from them and learn from their experiences. And with each meeting, I’m able to better fight for our farmers’ needs.”

Panelists included local dairy, beef and organic farmers, and representatives from wineries and vineyards, as well as representatives from governmental and educational agriculture organizations. Arcuri touched on topics ranging from renewable energy sources to immigration, as well as dairy and crop insurance programs that are key components of the Farm Bill. He also addressed the impact on the local economy of increased tourism and production from area wineries and vineyards.

Arcuri is an original cosponsor of the bipartisan Equitable Agriculture Today for a Healthy America (EAT Healthy) Act which focuses on specialty crops, such as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, maple products, dried fruits and nursery plants. The act would ensure that crops important to the local economy, like wine grapes and organic produce, receive full and equal consideration of federal resources in the upcoming Farm Bill. The value of New York’s tree fruit and grape production totaled \$329 million in 2006. New York ranks third in the nation for wine and grape production.

“Specialty crops, like organic produce and vineyards, are a large part of our economy here in Upstate New York, but they have all too often been left out of federal legislation,” Arcuri said.

Last month, Arcuri voted to extend the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) Program to ensure that small dairy farmers throughout the country are protected from severe price fluctuations. Arcuri is also a cosponsor of legislation that would continue the MILC program at the original level of 45% of the difference between the \$16.94 per hundredweight trigger prices and the Class I price in Boston, double current cap payments to 4.8 million pounds, and introduce a new price floor of \$15.58 for the Federal Marketing Order System and index that price floor to inflation.

“With approximately 6,800 dairy farmers, New York ranks third in milk production nationwide,” Arcuri said. “I strongly support extending the MILC program – farmers in our area depend on it and it must be included in the upcoming Farm Bill budget.”

There are roughly 35,600 farms in New York – ninety-nine percent of which are family owned. New York’s top five individual commodities are: Dairy Products; greenhouse/nursery; apples; cattle/calves; and hay. Compared to other states, New York ranks: second in apple, maple and cabbage production; third in grape, milk, corn silage, and cauliflower production; fourth in fresh snap peas, sweet corn and pear production; and fifth in floriculture, cucumber and squash production. The farm economy in New York generates over \$3.6 billion annually, and twelve percent of the State’s workforce is employed in farm, food processing and retailing related jobs.

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